iii. The 'Sûreté Générale', the organization responsible for internal security. It had always been in French hands, although in principle the local police and gendarmerie were under the control of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. S L 648 635

iv. The control of the Beduin.

v. The censorship of the press, which was in French hands, although there was also a British military censor. (Shortly after the accession of the new Syrian and Lebanese Governments to power, they set up their own political censorships, which did not, however, replace that of the French, but were additional to it.) S L 648 204

Thirdly, in addition to these legislative and administrative limitations, there were various restrictions even on those powers which the Governments possessed : S L 648

i. Their freedom of action was restricted by the great influence of the administrative and technical 'conseillers', who, although officials of the Governments and in theory subordinate to the Ministers whom they advised, were in practice almost all-powerful in the departments to which they were attached.

ii. Another restriction arose from the existence of the officers of the 'Services Spéciaux' who were scattered throughout the country. In theory they were the Delegate-General's intelligence officers, but in practice they had always exercised a virtually unlimited authority in their regions : an authority which they had enforced where necessary by means of the 'Gardes Mobiles', a semi-military police force which they had at their disposal. Among other things, the control of the frontiers was in their hands.

The nationalists had always demanded the recognition of the two Parliaments as the sole sources of legislation ; the transfer of the Common Interests and other similar services to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments ; the abolition of the 'Services Spéciaux' officers and a curtailment in the powers of the 'conseillers'. It was clear that these demands would be pressed with vigour by the new Nationalist Governments, partly because of the principles involved but also because of concrete advantages to be gained from them. For example, control of the customs would give them power to regulate fiscal policy and thus indirectly to assist industry and trade, and would place in their hands an important source of S L 648 86

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI

S L 181

In neither country is there an officer caste or a strong military tradition, though the present Syrian regime is trying to create one.

Social Survey

S L 565 463 511

The ruling class in both countries is drawn from wealthy families; titles do not exist and the 'old' rich families, whose position and wealth come from land, mix freely with the 'new' rich families, whose money comes from commerce. There is no stigma in engaging in trade and even members of the upper class are merchants. A middle class of functionaries and employees has been growing up since 1948 in the three main cities. Their flats, between the splendour of the rich quarter and the huddle of the *suq*, are being built in quantities and their new, middle-class way of life is based on European standards. The mass of the people are artisans and labourers. The urban artisan approaches the middle class and the rural labourer approaches the hard life of the nomad; for the farm labourer the standard of living is generally low.

The Press

S L ●204 656

The press of both countries is important but no one paper or group of papers has established an ascendancy. Damascus had at one time over twenty daily papers none of which could guarantee a circulation of over 3,000. The same state of affairs holds true in Beirut where most parties issue Arabic and in some cases French papers; there are also Armenian newspapers and one English daily.

Individual Lebanese have founded papers and *Le Commerce du Levant*, published in Beirut, has a standing comparable with *La Bourse Egyptienne*. In both countries press censorship has frequently closed down a paper only for it to re-emerge under another name, and in Syria the military dictatorship has reduced the press to a mere mouthpiece of official propaganda.

Education

S L 871 [21] 658

In both countries there are primary and secondary schools, and the number of schools and students increase each year. Primary education is compulsory, and although reliable figures of literacy are not available,[1] it may be assumed that the percentage of illiterates is decreasing in both countries, but is higher in Syria than in Lebanon. In Syria, most of the schools are run by the state and of the private schools (which are

[1] An estimate for Syria for 1947 given in UN, Dept. of Social Affairs, *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*, 1952, was 40–50 per cent.

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 MI Middle East MI
SYRIA MDI

M 204*

the papers which could not afford to raise the guarantee. So in this case no freedom was lost, but might not much freedom have been lost if the situation had been reversed?

This same Lebanese law contained another provision, the purpose of which was the laudable one of obtaining fewer but better dailies. Here it is:

> Chapter XIII, Article 68. Until the number of political periodicals in all Lebanese territory reaches 15 no new licenses will be given to a daily political periodical unless the person owns two licensed political daily newspapers which will stop being published finally as a condition for granting the new license. After that no new license will be given unless the person owns one political newspaper that will stop being published finally.

Nor was this provision being rigidly enforced. Enforcement of it could gradually cause the number of dailies in Lebanon to decline to fifteen, and thereafter remain at fifteen. Fifteen dailies should provide room for a good deal of diversity of opinion, and if this number were competing for the circulation and advertising revenues in Beirut and Tripoli which more than thirty dailies now have to share, the fifteen could afford to be much less dependent on secret funds than many Lebanese dailies now are. A provision like this is easy to defend, if it stops at this point. But the point also establishes a principle which is susceptible of extension. If the number can be limited by law to fifteen, under other conditions it can be limited by law to one official gazette.

M 204*
S 204

Some of the most interesting experiments of recent years, designed to raise standards and reduce numbers through government intervention, have occurred in Syria. One of the sources who reviewed them in an interview was Ahmad Asseh, who at the time of the survey was director of programs for the Syrian Broadcasting Station and United Press correspondent in Damascus. Asseh participated in drafting the press law which was adopted by ministerial decree in 1949. Like many other Arab sources, Asseh said that the press has been much more free in the years since independence than it was under foreign rule. At first this was maintained by relatively loose administration of the laws which remained on the books after the French mandate ended in 1943 and the wartime French-British military occupation ended in 1945.

Although there were cabinet re-shuffles from time to time Syria had relatively stable government from this time until late in 1948, under the National Bloc of politicians whose prestige was high as a result of their recent triumph over the French. During much of this period Asseh was editor of *An Nasr*, an independent nationalist daily which was founded in 1943 to participate in the struggle against French rule and which at the time of the survey had the highest circulation of any daily in Damascus. He spoke of the freedom to criticize government which he had enjoyed as an editor

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 MI Middle East MI
SYRIA MDI

during this period. Two other Damascus owner editors, Najib Rayyis of *Al Qabas* and Wajih Haffar of *Al Insha*, expressed similar views. Nevertheless, according to Asseh, the newspapers kept pressing for still more freedom.

It probably should be interpolated here that the prestige of the National Bloc was declining toward the end of this period and that criticism of it was on the increase. Its position became very shaky after the middle of 1948, when the Syrian Army in the Palestine War failed to live up to the public's high expectations of it and when this was blamed on corruption among the politicians in power. Asseh said an attempt was made in 1948 to adopt a press law which would have limited freedom greatly, but there were public demonstrations and this cabinet fell. A reference source[1] indicates that factors other than this attempt to adopt a new press law caused the fall of this cabinet on December 1, 1948. It turned out that this marked the start of a period of tremendous instability in government in Syria which endured down at least to the survey and which forms an important part of the background against which Syrian attempts to reform the press through government must be judged. Below is a brief review of these changes:[2]

December 17, 1948-March 30, 1949—After a 17-day crisis, a cabinet headed by Khalid al-Azm is formed and remains in power during this period of less than four months.

March 30-August 14, 1949—Army-supprted coup d'état brings government headed by Brig. Gen. Husni Za'im to power. Chamber is dissolved and constitution of Second Republic of Syria is suspended. Za'im is elected President late in the period in elections held after political parties have been suppressed by decree. Before regime has been in power four months it is overthrown by a second army-supported coup d'état led by Col. Sami Hinnawi.

August 14-December 19, 1949—Hinnawi, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, is an important political figure throughout this period, but the administration of the government is placed in the hands of a provisional civilian cabinet headed by Hashim al-Atasi. This cabinet governs by decree, pending the election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. Elections are held in November and on December 13 the provisional cabinet resigns, the intention being to permit the recently elected constituent assembly to select a new government. However, before this can be accomplished a third, army-supported coup d'état occurs, this one led by Lt. Col. Adib al-Shishakli.

December 19, 1949-May 29, 1950—Although Shishakli, either as deputy chief of staff and later chief of staff of the Syrian Army, remains an important political figure from this time on, the movement toward restoration of constitutional government is continued. The recently elected constituent assembly is not dissolved. It elects Hashim al-Atasi provisional president of Syria and proceeds with the work of drafting a new constitution. It takes until December

[1] *The Middle East*, op. cit., p. 396.

[2] Names, dates and much of the material taken from Chronology of Events sections of *Middle East Journal*. Vols. 3, 4, 5 and 6 cover this period. This was supplemented to some extent by material collected during the survey.

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 M1 Middle East M1
SYRIA MD1

28, nine days after the coup, to put together a provisional cabinet, acceptable both to the Army and the politically divided assembly. This cabinet, headed by Khalid al-Azm, then manages to govern until May 29, when it is forced out after about five months in power.

May 29-September 8, 1950—After a prolonged cabinet crisis, which really began on May 10 when the previous cabinet resigned and then withdrew its resignation for a few more days, a cabinet of caretakers, headed by Nazim al-Qudzi is put together. The understanding is that it will attempt to govern until the new constitution can be completed. This is accomplished and the constitution of the Third Republic of Syria is adopted on December 5. Provisional President Hashim al-Atasi is elected President on that date, and the constituent assembly becomes the Chamber of Deputies. The provisional cabinet resigns and Nazim al-Qudzi is asked to form a new cabinet, which he does on September 8. This cabinet is dominated by members of the People's Party, which in the elections of the previous year had been assured of control over 40-to-50 votes in the 114-member assembly. It wins a vote of confidence on September 11 of 63 to 5, which gives some indication of the delicate balance with which this and subsequent constitutional governments must attempt to govern.

September 8, 1950-March 10, 1951—With constitutional government now fully restored, the first cabinet headed by Nazim al-Qudzi under the Third Republic manages to stay in power five months before it is forced out.

March 10-July 31, 1951—After the Populist cabinet resigns on March 10, there is a crisis lasting until March 27, before Khalid al-Azm manages to form a coalition cabinet. It wins a vote of confidence of 50-0 on April 7, and attempts to govern with his shaky majority which is not really a majority and with the People's Party bloc in opposition. It lasts until July 31, about four months.

July 31-November 7, 1951—There is a prolonged crisis here, which actually began about July 19 and lasted until August 9, when Hasan al-Hakim, an independent, finally manages to put together a cabinet dominated by members of the People's Party. It lasts less than four months before it resigns as a result of divisions within the cabinet itself.

November 7-November 29—This 3-week period marks the longest cabinet crisis Syria has yet seen. Various leaders try and fail to form a cabinet. On November 28 one appears to be on the verge of being formed. It is scheduled to consist of seven Populists, two independents and one member of the Socialist Front. The head of it is to be Dr. Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, a Populist who has visited Moscow, who is reported to be pro-Russian, and who also is reputed to have Moslem Brotherhood connections. In the negotiations leading up to the formation of his proposed cabinet Dawalibi has held out for and is scheduled to hold the Ministry of Defense portfolio as well as the Prime Ministership. Col. Fawzi al-Silo, a supporter of Shishakli, had been Minister of Defense in the previous four cabinets, whether they were Populist-dominated or coalitions not dominated by the Populists. Before this proposed Dawalibi cabinet can take office, Syria's fourth coup d'état in two years occurs. It is led by Col. Adib al-Shishakli, who led the previous coup of December 19, 1949, largely in an effort to bloc a People's Party project

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 M1 Middle East M1
SYRIA M01

x M 204 S 204 175

for union of Syria with Hashimite Iraq, but who then retired from a position of great public prominence and permitted the effort to restore constitutional government to continue.

November 29, 1951 to ?—For a few days after Shishakli took power in his second coup he made some effort to permit the constitution to continue to function. Dawalibi, most of the members of his proposed cabinet and various People's Party leaders were arrested by Syrian Army forces under Shishakli's command on November 29, but the Chamber was not immediately dissolved. In fact, on December 1 it was announced that President Atasi, who was under house arrest, had asked Hamid al-Khuja to form a cabinet. On December 2 came the announcement that Atasi had resigned, the Chamber had been dissolved, and Shishakli had been proclaimed Chief of State. The following day Col. Fawzi al-Silo was named Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.

x M 204 S 204

Syria's first major experiment at press reform came under the Za'im regime. The power of government, which was ruling by decree, was used to reduce the number of daily papers in Syria to ten, compared to the thirty or more which had been normal for all Syria for some years before and after World War II. The papers which were suspended were compensated for their loss. Syrians disagree as to the fairness with which this reduction in numbers was handled and as to its real purpose.

Asseh said Za'im appreciated the value of propaganda and was setting out to turn the press into a propaganda instrument which could be tightly controlled by the state. The papers which were permitted to live became "official," he said, and unfavorable comment and criticism were prevented and there was virtually no press freedom. Spiro al-'Isa, editor of *Alef Ba*, one of the Damascus papers permitted to live, said that the reduction in numbers was handled fairly and that it did not wipe out an opposition press. The objective, as he and others explained it, was to reduce competition to a point where papers could live on circulation and advertising revenues and stop depending on secret funds.

To a degree this apparently succeeded. Circulations seem to have risen to a point where all of them should have been making money, according to the kind of calculations which were explained in Chapter IV. Sources disagreed on how much circulations rose, but the maximum estimates would put the total collective daily circulation of the Za'im period far under the total which preceded and followed this period.

Za'im was in power less than four months before he was assassinated in the coup which followed his coup, and this is too short a period to indicate much about how any sort of an experiment with the press was going to work out. Its mixed motivations, however, seem to be quite clear. There was probably a sincere desire to reform the press. The effort took the form it did as a result of the widespread belief that there were too many papers,

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 MI Middle East MI
SYRIA MDI

M 204.8
S 204

that things would be better if there were fewer ones. So government intervened. "Za'im appreciated the value of propaganda as a weapon," Asseh said, "but he did not know how to use it. He tried to control too much." Another source,[8] which devotes very little attention to the press, says Za'im's "behavior deteriorated into arbitrary megalomania which led to his murder."

The succeeding government changed Za'im's press policy, and almost at once the number of dailies in Syria came back up to a point which can be considered normal. The 1949 press law was adopted by decree less than two months after the Hashim al-Atasi cabinet had come to power. The Chamber of Deputies had been dissolved under Za'im. As was noted in the previous chapter, this law abolished the practice of arbitrary administrative suspension. This is a contribution to greater freedom of the press in Syria which had lasted in the letter of the law up at least to the time of the survey.

As originally adopted, the law contained some reform features which deserve analysis. It was an attempt to legislate standards of journalism upward and at the same time encourage the formation of party organs, openly identified as such. This was done by making the conditions for licensing dailies more difficult to meet than they had been previously, and then exempting the party organ from such conditions. In theory, the papers capable of meeting the conditions should have been better papers and it would hardly have been possible in Syria for as many papers to meet the conditions as had existed previously.

A daily was required to appear at least six days a week, in at least six pages, and it had to have at least 1500 circulation for Damascus, 1000 for Aleppo and 800 for other Syrian cities. A Damascus daily had to have at least three assistant editors and one reporter, and elsewhere they had to have two assistant editors and one reporter. Damascus dailies had to subscribe to at least two world news agencies, others to at least one. The security fund to be deposited with the government was put at 2000 Syrian Pounds (about $600) in cash. Educational requirements were defined and, while existing editors and owners were exempted from them, the government rather than the press syndicate was given the right to define who would be recognized as a journalist.

Newspapers were given two months to comply with these and other provisions of the law too numerous to mention here. The law was adopted before the number of papers had completely returned to normal after abandonment of the Za'im policy. Its enforcement would have prevented the reappearance of many papers which were seeking new licenses. They and their political supporters, joined by the existing papers which went on strike for a time and ceased publication in protest against the new law, forced it to be amended by decree. Not all of the provisions described above were

[8] *The Middle East*, p. 396.

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 Ml Middle East Ml
SYRIA MDI

removed by the amendments, but informally it was agreed that they would not be enforced and they had not been enforced up to the time of the survey. Some of them could still be invoked either to reform the press or destroy opposition papers.

The amendments and failure to enforce provisions which were not taken out of the law caused the experiment designed to encourage the formation of openly identified party organs to die aborning. In theory, this kind of reform also sounds like a desirable thing. In effect, it recognizes that some political subsidization of papers is necessary in the Arab world due to the limited business revenues which are available to support the press. It tries to bring this out into the open, so that the sources of such subsidies can be clearly identified, rather than being half secret and half identified as is the case at present. Again, it is the evils which grow out of the operation of secret funds in the press sphere which create pressure and seeming justification for government to intervene here. The question is always this: Is such intervention, potentially dangerous to freedom, justified by the improvement which is likely to come?

Syrian experience has not provided an answer, but perhaps an answer is available in Iraq. Iraq has a similar provision in its press law, but it is much more limited in scope. Non-party papers can be penalized in Iraq by administrative action of government, whereas party papers can take their cases to courts. The Iraqi law makes no attempt to establish standards for non-party papers which the average paper in Iraq would have difficulty in meeting and which could therefore be destroyed by law. Iraq has accumulated considerable experience under this system. Whether it is due to the law or not, (it could be due to political party development outside the law) the fact is that Iraq has more party papers, openly identified as such, than are commonly found elsewhere in the area.

Some of them are among the leading papers in Baghdad, but there is no evidence that they are as a group any better than the non-party papers. Nor is there any evidence that the non-party papers are any less political or any less active in the realm of secret funds than is the case in Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. The available evidence seems to point to this conclusion. If the law is drawn and administered in a way which does not represent a threat to the freedom of the non-party paper, an attempt to grant the party organ favoritism with a view to encouraging their formation fails to achieve the reform sought in the non-party press.

Returning to Syria, the amendment of the law and the informal agreement that some provisions would not be enforced brought the Syrian press back to its normal numbers, its normal freedoms, its normal politicalness, and its normal partial dependence upon secret funds between the end of 1949 and the second Shishakli coup d'etat, on November 29, 1951, followed by Shishakli's assuming dictatorial power on December 1. This was a period

72:McFadden J-5 (1951-52)1953 Ml Middle East Ml
SYRIA 1951

M 204*
S 204

of almost two years, when Syrians once again enjoyed the benefits which can be obtained from a relatively free press and the handicaps which accrue from it under conditions which are normal for Arab journalism.

It is clear that something was operating in Syria during this period and before then which made it impossible to attain even a reasonable degree of stable government. No one can say how much the press contributed to this instability, but a press which is relatively free to criticize government contributes to some degree or the press is failing in a duty which democratic theory assigns to the press. Whatever the press did or did not do and however much value might be assigned to the theory of freedom of the press, no society can long endure the degree of governmental instability which Syria endured during this period. The second Shishakli coup came in an effort to bring some order and some stability into Syrian affairs.

The survey of the Syrian press was made starting on December 3, a few days after Shishakli had assumed power, and extending at different times through January. Immediately after the coup some of the papers which had been supporting the Peoples Party were suppressed. Such actions are normal after almost every change of government in the Arab states, and the timing of the visits[4] to Syria did not then or later permit the collection of information required to discuss normal press policy under Shishakli.

It should be noted in passing that during the first brief period when Shishakli was in power after December 19, 1949, he took the leadership in gradually restoring constitutional government. The elections that fall were said to be as free and as honest as elections normally are in Arab countries and they were accompanied by a normal degree of press freedom. At the time of the survey there was, of course, a great deal of talk as to what the future might bring for the press of Syria, but no one yet knew and few ventured to predict. Journalists talked freely about press problems and political problems, and as might be expected, there was some opposition expressed to Shishakli.

M 204*
178
186

The overwhelming reaction, however, was one of despair that constitutional government had failed, and almost everyone expressed hope that stability might somehow be restored and maintained. There was a "wait and see" attitude as to whether or not Shishakli might prove capable of attaining this aim. All of this left the strong impression that any government, Shishakli's or some other, which could succeed in restoring stability and making at least some progress toward modernization and reform would have no difficulty in remaining in power for quite a long time in Syria.

This same desire for reform and stability was present in Egypt, where the survey was started one week after a mob, which had been infiltrated by Communists, almost succeeded in burning down Cairo, and it was pres-

[4] The first of these began on December 3, 1951 and continued at intervals through January, 1952.